

IRRUPTION OF BUDGERYGAAHS INTO THE SOUTH-WEST, 1951

[Editor's note: This year has witnessed an unusual irruption of the Budgerygah (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) into the South-west. These birds have not previously been recorded far within the forested corner of the South-west. There are reports of sporadic occurrences in parts of the wheat-belt (cf. Mr. Sedgwick's observations hereunder). Tom Carter (*The Emu*, vol. 23, 1924, p. 225) regarded them as erratic visitors to the Broomehill district and referred to one observation at the Williams River in August, 1917.]

Mouth of Murchison River.—"Recently I visited Booley Pool which is one of several large pools just inland from Murchison House Station on the Murchison River . . . In the same locality, but at the mouth of the river, many flocks of Budgerygaahs were also sighted and it was remarked that it was unusual to find so many so far south."

—JIM LAWRENCE, Como (in *Wild Life* (Melbourne), vol. 14, no. 2, August 1951, p. 168).

Morawa.—During the early part of June, 1951, large numbers of Budgerygaahs appeared in the Morawa district in flocks varying from a dozen or so individuals up to large groups exceeding 200 birds. Although small flocks are often seen, mainly to the eastward, it has apparently been many years since such a large influx of this species occurred here. Some residents who have lived in the district for over 30 years consider that it is more than two decades since such a large-scale irruption of Budgerygaahs from the north last occurred. The birds became so conspicuous that many people not usually interested in bird movements have remarked on their presence, and until mid-July I had entertained the hope that numbers might remain in the district to breed, as did the Cockatiels after their incursions in the spring of 1949. At the time of writing (August 15), I have not seen any for some weeks. Their presence, and the passage of flocks, began to dwindle about mid-July.

—S. R. WHITE, Morawa.

Bolgart.—Although Budgerygaahs are known to have visited Bolgart many years ago they have not been seen in this district for at least 17 years. This year, however, they have been present in good numbers and noted by several people. The first flock, of about 100 birds, was seen late in May. Early in June another flock of about 50 birds was seen one mile from town. On August 30 at the same place a smaller flock of about a dozen was noted.

—(Mrs.) RICA ERICKSON, "Fairlea," Bolgart.

Gingin.—Mr. Edgar, of Gingin, informs me that in June last a flock of about 30 Budgerygaahs appeared in his paddocks, feeding on the grass seeds. They disappeared during a rainy spell following but returned afterwards.

—L. GLAUERT, W.A. Museum, Perth.

Yanchep.—The Budgerygahs were here for about 3 or 4 days, one day being May 17. There must have been 2-300 of them, but it was difficult to count them as they flew about all the time. We did count 35 once on a small tree and they lined the wireless and laundry lines. I wondered what they were finding to eat, as we had no fruit in the garden at the time. On the last day of their being here about a dozen of what we believed to be "Ceylon Crows" turned up and flew about among the Budgerygahs, we thought in a friendly fashion. Next morning the Budgerygahs and Crows had disappeared, but we found 30 of the little birds dead in the grass and vegetable garden, each with a wound at the back of the head and a long rip in the chest, some of their insides being eaten out apparently.

—(Mrs.) MARY LINDSAY, Yanchep Estate, Yanchep.

Lake Coollelal, north of Perth.—On June 12, 1951, Mr. C. F. H. Jenkins and I took Mr. Tom Spence, an ornithologist from England, on a run to Yanchep. Whilst watching water birds at Lake Coollelal, on the Wanneroo Road, 10 miles north of Perth, we were greatly surprised to see a flock of 25-30 Budgerygahs fly swiftly past to the southward. This was our first record of the species for the Swan River District.

—D. L. SERVENTY, Nedlands.

Wooroloo.—On July 29, 1951, I saw a flock of Budgerygahs fly into a peach orchard near Wooroloo. Seventeen birds, possibly the entire flock, perched in the trees, but from time to time groups of birds flew down to the ground and fed among Cape Weed (*Cryptostemma calendulaceum*) and other herbs growing between the trees. Eventually all the birds descended to the ground and were still feeding when I left.

A week later, with my son Lindsay, I revisited the orchard and again located Budgerygahs. On this occasion there appeared to be c. 50 birds present, their behaviour being similar to that of the flock encountered previously.

On August 12 my son and I walked out 4 miles along the Bailup Road looking for Budgerygahs. On the way back we found a flock of 35 in an orchard. These were 1½ miles from the locality of our earlier observation. We heard the birds before we saw them and, strangely enough, the first bird we sighted proved on close inspection to be an undoubted Elegant Parrot (*Neophema elegans*). When we had finished with him we located our real quarry.

On August 7, the mechanic of the Mobile Film Unit informed me that on his way from Werribee to Wooroloo he had passed a flock of about 50 "Love-birds" and asked me whether I thought it possible!

In 1940 I saw a flock of Budgerygahs near Lake Richmond, Rockingham, but attached no great importance to the observation

at the time, assuming that the birds were aviary escapees, a conclusion that in the light of recent observations may not have been justified.

On October 12, 1941, I observed Budgerygahs at Wongan Hills, and, in late January 1942, Budgerygahs were present at Dangin. These are my only records for the agricultural areas of the South-west.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Wooroloo.

Near Baker's Hill.—When motoring along the Northam Road on August 14, 1951 with Messrs. A. R. Tomlinson and J. S. Crawford of the Vermin Branch of the Department of Agriculture, we met with a flock of Budgerygahs in jarrah forest country 7 miles on the Perth side of Baker's Hill. There were 15-20 birds in the flock and they were feeding on spilled wheat at the roadside.

—D. L. SERVENTY, Nedlands.

Bickley and district.—On June 8, G. F. Parton noted a single bird flying a zig-zag course amongst the roadside trees here in the evening, its notes and appearance on wing being unfamiliar. In the light of subsequent events we concluded it was one of these small parrots which had become separated from the flock, and was therefore the first recorded here in a wild state. In the forenoon of June 10, I saw a flock of about 20 flying swiftly in close formation north along Piesse gully, the bright green of their backs leaving a vivid impression. Nevertheless for the moment I was not sure of them. On June 18 I saw a flock of 18 about in the forenoon, there no longer being any doubt whatever about their identity. They were once perched in rows along the limbs of a dry sapling, some of them moving about a little and chattering amongst themselves. Suddenly they were all away on wing again in a close flock. Their notes while perched were different to their call when in flight. This small flock was seen in flight several times during the forenoon.

Subsequently Mr. John Rose, who was familiar with the birds in the North-west, told me he saw a flock of about 20 near his home at Lesmurdie early in June. The species was also noted at Pickering Brook by Mr. and Mrs. G. Spriggs. Flocks were about the grazing fields at Walliston during the greater part of July, and were repeatedly seen in that locality by Mr. L. Gilchrist.

From the Chittering district Mr. E. G. Schmidt reports that small flocks appeared early in July, two birds falling to a neighbour's gun.

—W. H. LOARING, Bickley.

Beverley.—On August 31 I saw a flock of 15-20 Budgerygahs about 2 miles west of Beverley, on the road to the Avondale estate.

—J. S. CRAWFORD, Department of Agriculture, Perth.